

MAKING FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2003—Continued

AMENDMENT NO. 27

Mr. STEVENS. Madam President, I ask for regular order on amendment No. 27, the LIHEAP amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right. The amendment is now pending.

Mr. STEVENS. I ask for the yeas and nays on that amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

Mr. STEVENS. For the information of the Senate, this is the LIHEAP amendment. The statements concerning the amendment will be after—

Mr. REED. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that there be 1 minute for myself and Senator COLLINS to explain the amendment.

Mr. STEVENS. Madam President, that would be in order. I have no problem with that. I ask for 1 minute on each side to explain this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REED. Madam President, this amendment would direct the President to release \$300 billion for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. It will be offset by using unexpended emergency LIHEAP funds which were already appropriated in the 2001 Supplemental Appropriations Act. Today, as the temperatures freeze, people throughout the country—people in the Northeast, the Midwest, many parts of the country—are freezing. This includes low-income seniors. With rising oil prices, a declining economy, and cold temperatures, it is the “perfect storm” for those people. We can help them with this amendment.

The amendment will also provide assistance to address the scorching heats of summer in other parts of the country. I urge passing.

I yield the remaining time to my colleague Senator COLLINS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, when I left Maine earlier today, the forecast was for temperatures with a wind chill of 40 below zero tonight. We are facing a “perfect storm” of exceedingly cold winter weather, high energy prices, and a difficult economy.

This amendment is a modest amendment with very little budget impact. But it is an amendment that will make a real difference in the lives of low-income families in Maine and States across the Nation.

No one should have to choose between being warm in the winter, buying prescription drugs, or buying the food they need to remain healthy. This amendment will address the needs of thousands of low-income families across this Nation so that they will not be faced with those choices.

Madam President, I urge adoption of the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. STEVENS. We are prepared to accept this amendment, but I think the sponsors wish a vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The yeas and nays have been ordered. The question is on agreeing to the amendment of the Senator from Rhode Island, Mr. REED.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I announce that the Senator from Kansas (Mr. BROWNBACK) is necessarily absent.

Mr. REID. I announce that the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. BINGAMAN), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. DASCHLE), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Florida (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. HARKIN), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. HOLLINGS), and the Senator from Arkansas (Mrs. LINCOLN) are necessarily absent.

I further announce that, if present and voting, the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) and the Senator from Arkansas (Mrs. LINCOLN) would each vote “aye”.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALEXANDER). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 88, nays 4, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 10 Leg.]

YEAS—88

Akaka	Dodd	McCain
Alexander	Dole	McConnell
Allard	Domenici	Mikulski
Allen	Dorgan	Miller
Baucus	Durbin	Murkowski
Bayh	Edwards	Murray
Bennett	Enzi	Nelson (FL)
Biden	Feingold	Nelson (NE)
Bond	Fitzgerald	Pryor
Boxer	Reed	Reid
Breaux	Graham (SC)	Roberts
Bunning	Grassley	Rockefeller
Burns	Gregg	Santorum
Byrd	Hagel	Sarbanes
Campbell	Hatch	Schumer
Cantwell	Hutchison	Shelby
Carper	Inhofe	Smith
Chafee	Inouye	Snowe
Chambliss	Jeffords	Specter
Clinton	Johnson	Stabenow
Cochran	Kennedy	Stevens
Coleman	Kerry	Sununu
Collins	Kohl	Talent
Conrad	Landrieu	Thomas
Cornyn	Lautenberg	Thomas
Corzine	Leahy	Voinovich
Craig	Levin	Warner
Crapo	Lieberman	Wyden
Dayton	Lott	
DeWine	Lugar	

NAYS—4

Ensign	Nickles
Kyl	Sessions

NOT VOTING—8

Bingaman	Feinstein	Hollings
Brownback	Graham (FL)	Lincoln
Daschle	Harkin	

The amendment (No. 27) was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREE- MENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, it was my hope that we could debate and vote on

the confirmation of the Ridge nomination during today's session. It is my understanding that the other side of the aisle will require approximately an hour and 40 minutes for debate. In a discussion a few minutes ago, we agreed that we would at least begin that debate tonight.

Shortly, I will be asking for unanimous consent to outline what the proposal is.

It is an important nomination. I believe all of us would like to address and vote on the nomination as soon as possible. We will be conducting that vote tomorrow.

I encourage our colleagues who have statements to make those tonight, if at all possible.

As in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that following the stacked votes on Wednesday morning, the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of Calendar No. 1, the nomination of Tom Ridge to be Secretary of Homeland Security. Further, I ask that the debate time be limited as follows: Senator DORGAN, 15 minutes; Senator BYRD, 15 minutes; Senator CARPER, 15 minutes; Senator FEINSTEIN, 10 minutes; Senator LAUTENBERG, 20 minutes; Senator LIEBERMAN, 15 minutes; Senator DASCHLE, 10 minutes; and Senator COLLINS to be in control of 1 hour and 40 minutes. I further ask unanimous consent that following the use or yielding back of the debate time the Senate proceed to a vote on the confirmation of the nomination with no intervening action or debate; further, that following the vote, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President, if I could, through the Chair, direct a question to the majority leader, it is my understanding that the majority leader is contemplating two votes in the morning.

Mr. FRIST. That is correct.

Mr. REID. And once that consent is done, it is my understanding we would have a couple votes, is that right, at 9:15 or 9:30 in the morning. Following that, this debate would take place, and we would vote on this matter prior to the normal party caucuses; is that right?

Mr. FRIST. That is correct. I understand that Senator CARPER may be willing to use his time tonight. I would encourage others to do so, once the unanimous consent request is agreed to. Shortly, we will enter into an agreement for two stacked votes for tomorrow morning at approximately 9:30. Following those votes, we will begin consideration of the Ridge nomination. I expect the vote will occur prior to the policy luncheons tomorrow afternoon, as outlined.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the second vote tomorrow morning be a 10-minute vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I remind my colleagues that late nights are to be expected for the remainder of this week as we continue to work through amendments to the appropriations bill. I believe the amendments have been filed at this juncture. I look forward to having the opportunity of looking through the amendments so we can give our colleagues a better idea of the schedule over the course of this week. It is my hope we will be able to complete the bill this week as early as possible. I think after looking over the amendments that have been given to the managers we will have a much better idea in that regard.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator COLLINS be yielded 10 minutes at this juncture.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MAKING FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2003—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be added as cosponsors to the LIHEAP amendment just adopted: Senators GRASSLEY, SPECTER, LIEBERMAN, KOHL, BAUCUS, and LINCOLN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. COLLINS. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, Senator JACK REED and I have offered an amendment that provides for the immediate release of \$300 million in funds for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, also known as LIHEAP.

I thank the chair and ranking member of the Labor-HHS Appropriations Subcommittee, Senators SPECTER and HARKIN, for their efforts in support of this critical program. Despite the extremely difficult fiscal constraints facing our Nation, Senators SPECTER and HARKIN have managed to provide \$1.7 billion in regular-year LIHEAP funds in the Omnibus Appropriations Act. This is \$300 million more than the administration's request.

Unfortunately, while the bill before us provides more regular LIHEAP funds than the administration requested, the total funding, which includes both regular funding and emergency funding, is considerably less than was provided in fiscal year 2002. In fact, total LIHEAP funding in this bill falls \$300 million below the total funding provided in fiscal year 2002. It is also \$300 million below the total funds provided in the Labor-HHS appropriations bill which passed the Senate Appropriations Committee on July 18, 2002, by a vote of 29 to 0.

Mr. President, the amendment that Senator REED of Rhode Island and I have offered would provide for the immediate release of an additional \$300

million for low-income heating assistance by designating emergency funds provided in the Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2001 as regular-year funds for fiscal year 2003.

For that reason, our amendment is fiscally responsible. Because these funds were already made available, our amendment does not increase total spending in the omnibus appropriations bill. These are funds that were already approved. The effect of our amendment is for this \$300 million to be released immediately.

Some might argue that these funds should not be released unless the President declares an emergency. Anyone who thinks that we don't currently have an emergency in home heating assistance should visit with a low-income family in Houlton, ME. Houlton recently experienced the coldest temperature of any place in the lower 48 States. A few days ago, temperatures in Houlton were 19 degrees below zero. Tonight, the forecast, with windchill, is for the temperature range to be from 20 to 40 below in some parts of my home State. When the temperature is that cold, and you do not have money in your budget to heat your home, that is an emergency.

Adding to the problem of exceptionally cold winter weather, energy prices have escalated dramatically. The cessation of oil exports from Venezuela, as well as the prospect of a war in the Middle East, have pushed the price of crude oil up by nearly \$6 per barrel in the last month. Home heating oil inventories are near 5-year lows, and prices are 20 percent higher than last winter. The Energy Information Administration predicts that home heating oil prices could rise 45 percent by the time winter is over. The price of natural gas, kerosene, and other fuels are facing similar pressures.

In addition to a cold winter and high energy prices, we are also facing difficult economic times. Unemployment has reached an 8-year high. In Maine, as in many States, low-income and unemployed workers are struggling. Just last week, Great Northern Paper, the largest employer in northern Maine, filed for bankruptcy and laid off its workforce of more than 1,000 employees.

In short, we are facing a "perfect storm" of high energy prices, exceedingly cold weather, and a difficult economy. With little prospect for a quick resolution of the crises in Iraq and Venezuela, continued forecasts for a cold winter, and the dubious prospects for a very quick economic rebound, all of us living in cold weather climates will face challenges in order to heat our homes this winter.

This combination of factors strains everyone's pocketbook, but, of course, it places a particular burden on seniors living on limited incomes and on our low-income families. These families already carry a higher energy burden than most Americans. They can spend up to 20 or 25 percent of their entire in-

come just paying their home energy bills. No one should have to choose between heating their homes or putting food on the table, having prescriptions in the medicine cabinet, or even staying in their homes altogether.

Experience has shown, however, that pressures to pay energy bills and the inability to pay have resulted in increased medical expenses for our elderly, malnutrition for our children, and even homelessness. As an indicator of just how difficult this winter has been in my home State, let me tell you that 10,000 more people in Maine have applied for low-income heating assistance this year compared to last year.

Unfortunately, even as the need has increased, the amount of assistance has declined. In Maine, the average household benefit has seen a steady decline over the last four winters. In the winter of 1999 to 2000, the average LIHEAP benefit for a Maine family was \$491. The next year, it had fallen to \$433. By last winter, the number had further declined to \$358. Fortunately, with the approval of the Reed-Collins amendment, we can reverse this decline or at least ensure that more Maine families will be helped; otherwise, low-income Maine families struggling to heat their homes will only receive between \$330 and \$350 this winter, not nearly enough to help.

I would like to say a word about the history of the LIHEAP funds that our amendment addresses. The Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2001 provided an extra \$300 million in LIHEAP funds in order to help low income families deal with high energy prices. Report language specifically directed that at least \$150 million of these funds were to be used to address unmet needs resulting from high energy prices. The other half of the money was directed to be used to meet the most critical needs arising from energy cost increases and increases in unemployment, among other things.

I have been working for the better part of 2 years to secure the release of these funds. On August 13, 2001, I joined Senator REED, Senator KENNEDY, and a number of my colleagues in sending a letter to the President requesting the release of the very same \$300 million in emergency funds from the fiscal year 2001 supplemental appropriations bill. On September 10, 2001, I again joined many of my colleagues in sending a letter to OMB director Mitch Daniels requesting the immediate release of these funds. On October 26, 2001, 17 Senators joined Senator REED and me in a letter to the Senate Minority and Majority leader requesting legislative language to require the release of these funds. On October 30, 2001, I offered an amendment to the fiscal year 2002 Labor, Health and Human Services appropriations bill expressing the sense of the Senate that these funds should be released immediately. That amendment was supported by Senators SPECTER and HARKIN and passed the Senate as part of the fiscal year 2002 Labor-HHS bill.